

## CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

### **SUBJECT:**

Downtown Transportation Plan recommendations.

### **STAFF CONTACT:**

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### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

None

### **POLICY ISSUES:**

#### Downtown Subarea Plan/Downtown Livability Initiative:

The Downtown Subarea Plan was adopted in 2004. Its policies guide the physical development of Downtown Bellevue and the transportation project list in the subarea plan is intended to provide adequate vehicle capacity through the planning horizon of 2020. The update of the Downtown Transportation Plan acknowledges changed circumstances since 2004, and considers land use and transportation changes anticipated to 2030. Downtown transportation policies and projects will be integrated with the land use and urban design components of the Downtown Livability Initiative in a comprehensive package of Subarea Plan and Land Use Code amendments for Council consideration in 2014. Transportation Commission Chair Ernie Simas, also serves as co-chair for the Downtown Livability Initiative Steering Committee - ensuring compatibility between these two Downtown planning efforts.

#### Transportation Commission recommendations:

This memo documents the Transportation Commission's recommendations for Downtown mobility at this milestone stage of the planning process. Embodied in these recommendations is the consideration that everyone should be able to get around in Downtown Bellevue safely and comfortably, a concept that requires balancing the needs of roadway users, transit riders, pedestrians and bicyclists. Reasonably foreseeable roadway capacity projects in and around Downtown will provide an adequate vehicular level of service in 2030. Improvements are recommended to better accommodate the diverse needs of an increasing number of pedestrians and bicyclists. Recommended modifications to transit service and facilities will help make riding transit an even more attractive option than it is today.

Additional work will involve crafting specific policy language for the Downtown Subarea Plan that will articulate the ongoing and evolving strategy of providing mobility options. This strategy is not new, and prior investments have resulted in the vibrant and mobile Downtown Bellevue of today. Yet new policies and projects are needed to help shape the Downtown Bellevue of the future, a future in which walking is the logical option for short trips and longer trips can be made by car, transit or bicycle.

## **DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:**

     Action  
X Discussion  
X Information

## **BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:**

This memo provides an overview of the recommendations from the Transportation Commission for Downtown Bellevue mobility options, through the Downtown Transportation Plan (DTP). Details of the Commission's recommendations are included in Attachment 1, and will be the subject of the presentation and discussion with Council this evening.

### **Public Engagement**

Beginning in the summer of 2011, staff and the Transportation Commission worked with the community to understand the issues and opportunities related to Downtown mobility. Early in the process, walking and bicycling tours and an open house provided forums for residents and employees to point out what works well and what could be improved. Staff regularly provides DTP updates to the Bellevue Downtown Association and engages with other community organizations.

A project web site, <http://www.bellevuewa.gov/downtown-transportation-plan-update.htm> provides background materials and up-to-date information, including staff reports and presentations from the Transportation Commission meetings.

Staff meets monthly with the Transportation Commission, which is the Council-appointed advisory body for the DTP. Twenty four DTP-related meetings have been held to-date. Each month staff and the Commission have worked to develop concepts to address specific Downtown mobility issues and topics. Future work will develop policy language and project descriptions.

Downtown mobility was a popular topic at the Downtown Livability Initiative open house on November 29, 2012 and at the Spring Transportation EXPO on April 24, 2013. Downtown mobility issues, including sidewalks, crosswalks and parking, have been a significant part of the recent community discussions and focus group meetings held in the context of the Downtown Livability Initiative.

### **Downtown Mobility Options**

Community outreach identified issues and opportunities related to four Downtown mobility options: Private Vehicles (Roadways), Transit, Pedestrians, and Bicycles. Staff and the Transportation Commission have used the land use forecast for 2030 and the resulting travel demand in terms of the number of "person trips", to identify many of the Downtown mobility needs and have developed recommendations to address them. Some mobility components are of a qualitative nature, and these are also considered as significant pieces of Downtown mobility. Through analysis of both quantitative and qualitative factors the Commission has developed specific recommendations for each mobility option and will refer to the Downtown Livability Initiative those issues that are best addressed in the context of land use and urban design. The Transportation Commission has prepared recommendations for transportation policy concepts and projects for each mobility option – these are described briefly below and are documented more fully in Attachment 1.

#### **Roadways**

Direction from Council is to accommodate the forecast 2030 vehicular travel demand based on anticipated land use and other available modes, and to analyze opportunities for on-street parking, loading and other curbside uses to support businesses and residents.

The land use forecast for Downtown Bellevue anticipates a total of 70,300 jobs and 19,000 residents in 2030, an increase of 27,775 jobs and 12,142 residents over 2010. The assumed 2030 Baseline transportation network includes many roadway capacity projects that support Downtown land use and mobility. Within Downtown, the expansion of NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE provide additional vehicular capacity. Significant roadway projects outside of Downtown such as the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street Extension and the 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE expansion provide a benefit to Downtown by improving overall circulation to and from the east for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. Regional projects as well, on I-405 and SR 520, provide better access to points beyond Bellevue for both motorists and transit riders.

Travel demand modeling and Downtown vehicular level of service (LOS) analysis were significant factors in determining whether the Commission would recommend additional roadway capacity projects. The projected average LOS E for vehicles at Downtown intersections in the 2030 Baseline scenario is reasonable for a multi-modal mixed use urban setting. LOS D is projected if a few other roadway capacity projects in the 2030 “Build” scenario are added. This level of service outcome indicates the importance of these roadway capacity projects, and indicates that projects beyond those assumed in the model will not be necessary in the 2030 timeframe. Please refer to Attachment 1 for descriptions and maps of the assumed roadway projects.

#### Transit

The Downtown Transportation Plan Update addresses Council direction with recommended policies and projects that provide transit coverage that serves the planned land use pattern, the transit capacity that supports forecasted transit demand, transit speed and reliability enhancements that help bus passengers move throughout Downtown, and transit passenger comfort, access and information that support and improve ridership.

Transit “coverage” in Downtown Bellevue is defined as the proportion of residents and employees who live or work in a block within 600 feet of a stop on the frequent transit network. A frequent transit network route is one that provides 15-minute service during 14 hours on weekdays, with a 20-hour span of service. This measure results in an actual 86% coverage in 2010 and a projected 97% coverage in 2030. Coverage metrics are based on the East Link transit integration planning, and recommended transit routes that distribute service within Downtown consistent with draft planning through the Transit Master Plan.

Transit stops in Downtown Bellevue can be described in four types: the Local Transit Stop; the Primary Transit Stop; the Frequent Transit Network/RapidRide Station; and the Transit Center/Multimodal Hub. For each of these types, the Commission recommends specific components that relate to the transit stop function, boarding activity and location.

Anticipated 2030 transit demand is about a five-fold increase over current (2010) transit ridership. A ridership increase of this magnitude is not unprecedented in Downtown Bellevue, yet it may be a challenge to achieve in times of budget constraints. The Commission recommends the Council advocate for funding to provide the level of transit service that will be needed to meet this anticipated demand.

Targeted roadway corridor and intersection improvements may be needed to ensure that the transit riders enjoy a speedy and reliable transit service that allows it to be competitive with other motorized modes. Improvements to passenger facilities, including at the Transit Center, will help provide near-seamless access to the planned light rail station.

### Pedestrians

In a Downtown setting, the quality of the pedestrian environment affects mobility, economic development and quality of life. Breaking down the walk trip into its essential components has enabled the Transportation Commission to develop recommendations for specific enhancements: crosswalks designed to accommodate increasing numbers of pedestrians; mid-block crossings to facilitate pedestrian crossings of wide arterials between signalized intersections; sidewalks and curbside landscaping that serve as the fundamental pedestrian infrastructure; and through-block connections that provide walkable corridors through Downtown superblocks.

The Downtown urban environment and the anticipated pedestrian demand related to land use and transit service dictate a context-sensitive design approach for each type of pedestrian facility.

### Bicycles

Bicycle mobility and access is dependent on a comprehensive network of on-street bicycle facilities and wayfinding plus short-term on-street bicycle parking and long-term, secured commuter parking in garages. For both commuting and recreation, recommended policies and projects will support connectivity within Downtown and connections to neighborhoods and regional facilities such as the I-90 Trail and the future Eastside Rail Corridor Trail. The Commission recommends the Downtown Livability Initiative address long-term/commuter bicycle parking plus locker/shower facilities in new buildings through the Land Use Code.

### **DTP Integration with Downtown Livability Initiative**

The Downtown Livability Initiative (DLI) is well underway with community outreach and a Steering Committee that provides information and direction. DLI is addressing land use and urban design issues that are well-integrated with mobility through the Downtown Transportation Plan Update. Staff teams are co-mingled and, as mentioned, Transportation Commission Chair Ernie Simas also serves as Co-Chair for the DLI Steering Committee.

DTP has developed preliminary recommendations that will be handed off to the Downtown Livability Initiative to be more fully developed as urban design components and development standards. For example, the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Corridor and pedestrian through-block connections serve mobility, economic development and urban design functions. Through the Downtown Livability Initiative, design concepts will be further developed for these and other situations where mobility and land use/urban design overlap. A complete list of hand-offs to Downtown Livability is in Attachment 1.

During the next year, staff will fully integrate the Downtown Transportation Plan Update and the Downtown Livability Initiative in environmental (SEPA) analysis and will consolidate recommendations into a comprehensive package of recommended amendments to the Downtown Subarea Plan and Land Use Code for Council consideration.

### **DTP Integration with the Transit Master Plan**

While the Transit Master Plan is focusing on citywide transit service, capital facilities and transit operations, DTP considers specific transit corridors that serve Downtown from the region as well as routes and facilities within Downtown. Also, the Downtown Transportation Plan has coordinated with the Transit Master Plan to recommend adjusting transit routes to improve transit service coverage for Downtown residents and employees, enhance transit speed and reliability to help make transit an attractive mobility option, and improve passenger comfort, access and information to help in the journey to and from the bus. Ongoing refinements to transit

service and capital through the Transit Master Plan may inform the final recommendations of the Downtown Transportation Plan.

**Next Steps:**

During the remainder of 2013, staff and the Transportation Commission will refine recommendations based on Council input and community comments, and will begin developing specific policy language and project descriptions. Final recommendations on Downtown Transportation policy and projects will be integrated with the Downtown Livability Initiative. Monthly meetings with the Transportation Commission will continue, as will periodic updates and discussions with community groups. Additional community outreach, briefings and a comprehensive SEPA analysis will occur into 2014, in coordination with the Downtown Livability Initiative.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Please see mobility options in Transportation Commission recommendations (Attachment 1)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Please see Transportation Commission recommendations (Attachment 1)

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Recommendations from the Transportation Commission (provided under separate cover)